

Hot Potatoes (4): We Will Receive You

I. Introduction

- A. Hector was a 20-year-old Hispanic student in a church college-age class
 - 1. He was a Christian, but he was struggling with something in secret
 - a. He had grown close to 4 guys from class and spent a lot with them
 - b. One night he haltingly confessed to those four brothers, “*I’m gay*”
 - 1) Nervous silence, then, “*How long... When did you know...*”
 - 2) As they talked, Hector felt relieved— at last the secret was out
 - 2. But everything fell in on him as they started firing Bible verses
 - a. It was like a tag-team fight, attacked on every side and he left
 - b. In church the next Sunday, everyone was whispering about him
 - c. It was a long time before Hector ever went back to any church
- B. Our “*Hot Potato*” issue for today is “*What do we do with Hector?*”
 - 1. We’ve been looking at hot-button issues that we struggle with
 - a. Several of these “*hot potatoes*” are only hot potatoes in our tribe
 - b. Not only is IM not a hot potato most places; it’s not even a potato!
 - 2. Today’s hot potato issue divides whole churches and denominations.
 - a. Some churches make opposing gays and lesbians their identity
 - 1) They publish anti-LGBT position statements to their members
 - 2) They support anti-LGBT politic movements and candidates
 - 3) **Ex:** Girl went to confess struggle and ushered out and banned
 - b. Other churches believe there is no sin in someone’s sexual lifestyle
 - 1) Perform gay/lesbian marriages and ordain gay/lesbian clergy
 - 2) Their mission statement often affirms LGBT rights & equality
 - 3. Often lost in posturing and politics, “*What will we do with Hector?*”
 - a. The gospel must good news for Hector; it can’t be God hates you
 - b. Message can’t be, “*You’re on your own ‘til you change yourself*”
 - 1) The Bible says two things and it says them equally loudly
 - 2) It’s possible I’m going to make two groups equally unhappy

II. Homosexuality Is a Sin

- A. I'll say upfront that I believe the Bible teaches homosexual acts are sin
 - 1. Now, it doesn't teach that as often or as loudly as do some people do
 - a. Several texts we use are much less cut-and-dried that we'd like
 - b. With that caveat, Bible consistently see homosexual acts as sin
 - 2. We'll quickly survey what Preston Sprinkle calls "*Clobber Texts*"
- B. There are 3 of those texts in the OT—but in reality, there are only 2
 - 1. **First**, there is the story of Lot and men of Sodom ([Gen 19:5](#))
 - a. Isn't example of homosexuality but sexual violence (always sin)
 - b. What about sodomy? *You keep using that word...* ([Ezek 16:49](#))
 - 2. **Second** and **Third**: Law of Moses condemns it ([Lev 18:22, 20:13](#))
 - a. The first is a list of sexual sins; the second is their punishment
 - b. Homosexuality is in both lists... *so are other things* ([Lev 20:18](#))
 - c. How we are to apply these texts is more problematic that we admit
 - 1) *First*, is it fair to apply the prohibition without the punishment?
 - 2) *Second*, same section forbids trimming sideburns ([Lev 19:27](#))
 - 3. **Fourth** and **Fifth**: Two NT lists of sins [1 Cor 6:9](#), [1 Tim 1:9-10](#)
 - a. The first text uses two words condemning homosexuality ([NET](#))
 - b. These are lists, so there's no clues here to determine his meaning
 - 4. **Finally**, there's Paul description of the pagan world ([Rom 1:21-27](#))
 - a. Notice his repeated use of the word "*exchanged*" in this passage
 - 1) **First**, they exchanged the glory of God for images ([1:21-23](#))
 - 2) **Second**, they exchanged the truth about God for a lie ([1:25](#))
 - 3) **Third**, they exchanged natural sex for the unnatural ([1:26-27](#))
 - b. It's hard to not to see here what Paul thinks about homosexuality
 - 1) It's "*shameful*" and "*unnatural*" (where we get word "*physics*")
 - 2) God created sex for purpose & homosexuality distorts purpose
 - 3) God created male/female to express his own image ([Gen 1:27](#))
 - 4) Something about gay and lesbian sex that distorts God's order

- c. Point is NOT that homosexuality is the worst of all possible sins
- d. Point is that denying God will lead us to anything and everything
- e. He doesn't think gays are worst sinners— *thinks he is* (**1 Tim 1:15**)
 - 1) We're not better because our sin doesn't offend us as much!
 - 2) In the same discussion, Paul mentions a lot of sins (**1:28-31**)
 - 3) That sets Paul up REAL clobber text here! (**Rom 2:1**, NLT)

III. Homosexuality Is Only a Sin

- A. Our first point is homosexuality is sin; our second point is it's only a sin
 - 1. The gospel message is intended only for sinners (**1 Tim 1:15**)
 - a. Jesus came to save sinners, not collect saints. We're saved sinners!
 - b. Jesus said, "*I came to seek and to save the lost*" (**Luke 19:10**)
 - c. Pharisees criticized him for going to Matthew's house (**9:12-13**)
 - d. They just couldn't get why Jesus welcomed sinners (**Luke 15:1-2**)
 - e. Pharisees were shocked he was touched by sinners (**Luke 7:39**)
 - 2. **Question:** Will we be more like the Pharisees or more like Jesus?
 - a. Will we be a church of the Pharisees or a church of Christ?
 - b. Will we be a church that builds walls, or one that receives sinners?
 - c. Answering to that is as important as deciding if homosexuality is sin
- B. Some time ago, two women came into a church lobby to ask questions
 - 1. The first was obviously uncomfortable; someone tried to talk to her

"You don't understand; I'm prostitute; I don't belong with these holy people"

 - a. He replied, "*Just get to know us; we're all pretty scummy people*"
 - b. She asked, "*Is there be a place here for me?*" How do you answer
 - 2. Second was uncomfortable & didn't feel safe. She asked someone—

My wife is in the car; we'd like to visit. I need to know if we'd be welcome.

 - a. Would you say, "*Of course you're welcome*" and mean it?
 - b. Would you say, "*We teach truth here.*" Code for "*Not really!*"
 - 3. Is there a place at Denbigh for first woman but not for the second?
 - a. Are we willing to accept some sinners but not accept all sinner?
 - b. If there's no place for sinners, how can we be church of Christ?

IV. Conclusion

- A. Can we see homosexuality as sinful and still welcome gays & lesbians?
 1. Not only can we do both of those; we must do both of those
 - a. Will that be a bit uncomfortable? For both the church and guest!
 - b. Where do we get the idea the gospel calls us to comfortable?
 - c. God provided sinners a safe place to meet Jesus; it's called church
 2. Preston Sprinkle is NT scholar whose lot of research on this subject
 - a. At one point, he left ivory research to simple build relationships
 - b. He writes, "these people are not an issue; they are my friends"
 - c. All "problems" are seen differently when they are your friends
 - d. One of those is Drew Harper, gay man who grew up in church
 - 1) When he came out, church became something of non-option
 - 2) Drew tells a story about meeting some church ladies ([video](#))
- B. That's how to greet all who come our way, "*We will receive you*"
 1. It doesn't matter what kind of a mess their life as become
 - a. It doesn't even matter even if they realize that they are a mess
 - b. We meet people where they are and model Christ for them
 - 1) We can't do that unless we are willing to walk with them
 - 2) The very first part of that process is "*We will receive you*"
 2. That our invitation not matter where you are, "*We will receive you!*"
 - a. Jesus always met people where they were and so must his people
 - b. The old hymn we sing now affirms, "*Christ Receiveth Sinful Men*"
 3. If you need to meet Christ or repent of sin— "*We will receive you!*"